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ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Letter dated 30 December 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the secretariat of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on Human Rights

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the information on damage to the cultural heritage of the Republic of Azerbaijan as a result of the military aggression of the Republic of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan.

I would be grateful if you could circulate the present letter and the above-mentioned information as an official document of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on Human Rights under item 10 of the provisional agenda.

(Signed): Sima EIVAZOVA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Information on damage to the cultural heritage of the Republic of Azerbaijan as a result of the military aggression of the Republic of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan

1. Serious damage was caused to the cultural heritage of Azerbaijan as a result of Armenia's armed aggression against Azerbaijan. The vandalism of the occupying forces is clearly revealed by their spoliation of Azerbaijan's cultural heritage in the areas they seized, where unique cultural, historical and architectural sites were partially or completely destroyed. A large number of paintings and sculptures, ornaments of great value, decorative accessories and invaluable manuscripts were carried off by the invaders not only from museums but also from private collections to Armenia as "trophies". Moreover, according to available information, valuable museum pieces seized by Armenia's armed forces in occupied Azerbaijani territory were on a number of occasions put up for sale at international auctions as examples of Armenian culture.

2. As a result of this aggression, 500 architectural and 100 archeological relics and monuments, 22 museums, 808 clubs, 927 libraries, 85 music schools, 10 recreation and leisure parks, 4 State theatres, 2 concert organizations and 4 picture galleries, in which over 40,000 valuable items were stored, were plundered and destroyed.

3. The plundering of the museum of stone relics in the Zangelansk region is continuing under the occupation. Karabakh's history museum, the history museum in the town of Shusha, the Shusha branch of the Azerbaijani carpet and folk art museum, the history and local lore museums in the Agdam, Gubatlin, Zangelan, Dzhebrail, Kelbajar and Fizuli regions of Azerbaijan, the memorial museums of the founder of the first opera house in the Muslim east (1908), the musician and social public figure Uzeir Gadzhibekov, the eminent tenor Byul-Byul, student at Milan's La Scala and founder of Azerbaijani professional vocal art, and the famous musician and artist Mir Movsum Navvab. Statues of Uzeir Gadzhibekov, Byul-Byul, the famous poet and Vizier (Prime Minister) of the Azerbaijani Karabakh Khanate Vagif, and the poetess Khurshid-Banu Natavan - one of the rulers of the Karabakh Khanate - were destroyed or damaged. The unique twin-minaret mosque in the town of Shusha and places of worship in other occupied areas of Azerbaijan were destroyed. Many thousands of rare printed works and invaluable manuscripts were destroyed in libraries that were plundered and burnt down.

4. The fate of these destroyed relics and monuments and plundered valuables was described by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Azerbaijani Republic in November 1993 at the twenty-seventh session of UNESCO's General Conference in Paris. In November 1994 a UNESCO mission visited Azerbaijan to determine the condition of educational, cultural and architectural sites in the areas of Azerbaijan occupied by Armenia's armed forces and confirmed that serious damage to educational establishments and Azerbaijan's cultural heritage had been caused by the war.